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ABSTRACT

Prewriting involves the entire period of time (and necessary activities) which extends between knowing that one is going to write on something and knowing that one has found something specific and substantial to say about it. In classical rhetoric, prewriting is expressed by such terms as "inventio" (whereby the writer discovers ideas to write about) and "topoi" (the general probes or a series of questions one might ask about a subject in order to discover things to say about that subject). An intellectual approach to prewriting depends upon a formal set of questions, the equivalent of classical topoi. The intuitional approach, on the other hand, seeks to generate ideas by forcing the writer to dredge up from the subconscious the impression of the material that is stored there. There is some confusion of whether prewriting processes should be linear or alinear, sequential of simultaneous, methodically imposed or organically generated. Proponents of the intellectual approach would make the first choice in each instance. However, there is no real order for creativity--it just happens. Teachers of writing can and should come to understand a great deal about composing through careful observation, introspection, contemplation, and reflection. For what teachers of writing need, but have not had, is a reservoir of wisdom and sophistication about writing upon which to draw. (HOD)

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INVENTIO OR DISCOVERY: SOME REFLECTIONS ON PREWRITING

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To Thomas O. Sloane, for valor.

When I ran into two colleagues recently, they asked in concert why I looked so gloomy. I replied, "I'm in a real mess, I've promised to do something on *inventio*, and I can't think of a word to say." So gloomy was I that, not until they laughed did I realize the irony of my predicament. Then I began to wonder how, having taught composition for many years, having never been at a loss for an idea to write on, I was unable to invent a discussion about invention. Could it be that I felt intimidated? With no formal training in rhetoric, I had agreed to address a group of National Endowment for the Humanities fellows who were members of a graduate seminar in rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley--and worse, all composition teachers like myself. Yes, that could be it, I decided. But I felt no easier.

Then I realized that I had placed myself in a situation similar to my students'; like them, I was overwhelmed by how much of the subject I did not know and by the audience to whom I must reveal my ignorance. How could I possibly focus my attention in this negative state? That felt better. It is salutary to feel as your students feel, to be reminded. "But, of course," I added," I am not my students. They are young, green in experience, usually negative in their attitudes toward everything to do with writing, and they lack formal training in how to read, write and think analytically for academic purposes. I do not have their excuses."

By the time I had worked my way through these thoughts, I had also completed reading and re-reading such specialists as I considered crucial: Winterowd, Pike, Irmscher, Burke, Emig, Larson, Elbow, Corbett, Shaughnessy, Rohman are the names that come immediately to mind; and with them, the terms brainstorming, meditation, free writing, journal keeping, the journalistic formula, and other first hand ways of getting at a problem, like questionnaires and interviewing; and more, such as classical *topoi*, the dramatistic pentad, problem solving and lateral thinking, Rogerian strategy, heuristics and tagmemics, discovery and generative thinking.

Not surprisingly, as I looked back, I began again to feel worse, and not merely because I had given myself intellectual indigestion. On the one hand, I had, during the sixties, tried several of the unstructured approaches to invention, but with little success; the fluency in writing my students developed dried up each time they encountered hardcore midterm and final examination questions in other courses. On the other hand, I have never been able to divest myself of an antipathy toward structured approaches to invention, classical or contemporary. No argument has persuaded me that they do not threaten to cut students to their patterns or to impose on them the kinds of questions they should ask about the material, instead of letting the material suggest to them its mysteries and incompatibilities. I distrust the way they overlook the problem of mental set, that is, how to get the student (or have her get herself) into that state of mind where she can "mull over a project," which, as William Irmscher says, is "productive, not because it leads anywhere immediately, but because it sets into motion a subconscious or pre-conscious activity that has a way of operating without our awareness of it."[1] I have always considered the contemporary systems as merely clever twists on classical *topoi*, also as trendy. But then, I thought, since I have never tried any of them methodically, or known anyone who has, I really have no right to trash them.

I was cornered, and my time had grown alarmingly short. With increasing desperation, I tried a little free writing à la Elbow, then a whole bunch of squiggles, then little notes with arrows and circles connecting them, then lists of different approaches to invention, categorized a variety of ways--in short, whatever I thought might give rise in my mind to a genuine idea. Nothing worked. So I sat back and said to myself, "All you've agreed to do is talk about prewriting as you see it. Why don't you do just that?" "Well," came the reply, "because you don't see it as clearly as you should." Having no retort, I was silent. That encouraged the voice to resume. "Then, instead of trying to think what you think, why don't you just begin by puzzling your way through how others see prewriting? Give some background and then explore without certainty about your destination?" A thin straw, but no other being in reach, I grabbed on and in a few days found, to my surprise, that I had put together a complete paper. But "complete" is a misleading word since, though the paper had a beginning, middle, and end, it lacked a point of view. Therefore, what I wish to do here is to work the subject through again to see whether finally I can develop one, or, perhaps more important, if I still cannot, discover why not.

First, what do I mean by "prewriting?" Practicality demands that I offer the loosest possible definition: prewriting is the contemporary term used to refer to the entire period of time, and such activity as may be involved, between knowing that one is going to write on something--a text, a body of data, a proposition,

a visit to Aunt Tillie--and knowing (at least hoping) that one has found something specific and substantial to say about it. It is a temporal space, then, in which a variety of stimuli may evoke one or many responses.

To those who seek stimuli in classical rhetoric, the terms that come most readily to mind are *inventio*, which Ross Winterowd refers to as the means whereby a writer discovers ideas to write about, and *topoi*, meaning, not topics, as we commonly use that term, but "the general probes or a series of questions one might ask about a subject in order to discover things to say about that subject."[2] In today's neo-rhetoric, it is primarily the traditionalists who use the term *inventio* or its English equivalent, invention. But to those like Janet Emig who view invention as the first in "a series of discrete locksteps with no backsliding,"[3] the preferred term is "discovery," because, I assume, discovery need not refer to a rigid categorization of procedure. Or perhaps, as we shall see, because in invention lies a notion of *making*, whereas in discovery lies the different notion of *finding*. Whatever, let me for the moment say that, although discovery may be synonymous with invention, more often it seems to be used for any means at all--I do not use the word "method," since "method" denotes a linearity of effort--by which an idea is conceived and incubated. A further and, to me, very important distinction exists, namely, that whereas traditionally-oriented theorists seem to consider *invention* as referring to the process whereby a writer discovers ideas, some of the contemporary innovators consider *discovery* as referring to the means by which a writer discovers *himself* through the discovery of ideas. I shall return to this distinction shortly.

As for the term *topoi*, it seems to have remained largely in the province of classical rhetoric. Instead, innovators, as well as many traditionalists, seem to prefer the term "heuristics," a word for which I can provide no history, but which, according to Janice Lauer, a mathematician named Polya has described as "a certain branch of study, not very clearly circumscribed, belonging to logic, or to philosophy, or to psychology . . . to study the methods and rules of discovery and invention."[4] However, since today the term "a heuristic" is generally used to refer to the method itself, what has happened is that a set of *topoi* is now considered and referred to as a heuristic. So much for terms. Except to say that "invention" and "discovery" and "heuristics," like the term "prewriting," seem to thread their ways through nearly every issue of every contemporary journal that concerns itself with problems in composition (or so it seemed to me in my recent reading), ubiquities surely worth a digression.

Why are these terms to be found so often, and why is rhetoric itself, after a long decline, once more a prime focus for theorists and teachers of composition? Because--so the general

answer goes--those concerned with the teaching of writing have come round to the conviction (though many, of course, have always had it) that there is little point in students' learning something about grammar and syntax unless they also learn to have something worth saying. Put otherwise, students, like the rest of us, will care most about how they say something if they care about what it is that they are saying (and the audience they wish to say it to--but that is another issue). Furthermore, as David Harrington noted in an article in 1968, and Wayne Booth among many others has also noted, "finding an idea" has come to seem so "mechanical" and "superficial" an activity[5] that most textbooks and handbooks, even articles like one I just looked at, say simply 1) gather your data; 2) list the details; and 3) formulate a thesis statement, as if a thesis statement existed independent of an idea--a kind of mechanical summary of the text, or data, or occasion--or, as we have all seen in our students' papers, as if a thesis statement were no more than the student's opinion about the text, or data or occasion. Wrong. To have a thesis, one must find a central idea, a fundamental point of concern, and since that is what students have such difficulty finding, so the reasoning goes, we must offer them hints, clues, maps, whatever, to the treasure buried within the material (or within themselves). Thus the keen interest in rhetoric, especially in heuristics, with some theorists looking back to and adapting the classical process of *inventio* to fit a contemporary frame of reference, and others rising against them, much as progressive educators in this century have risen against traditional ones, to offer what they consider more natural and creative means to achieve similar ends.

But--to resume my main line of exploration--I see that each time I approach prewriting head on, I find myself dividing those concerned with it into two camps: "structured" and "unstructured," "traditional" and "innovative," "classical" and "creative," and before all these, the differing terms of "invention" and "discovery." I would like to reject such a division on the grounds that, like all artificial categorizations, this one oversimplifies the things being divided. But the truth is that to me, oversimplification or not, there are two camps, each distinguished less by surface form--though that is true--than by underlying impulse, as the already mentioned "finding" versus "making" and "discovering oneself" versus "discovering an idea" indicate. Therefore, though I expect to falsify by oversimplification, I will try to work out this division to see what it yields in itself and in terms of a larger argument. But to develop more fully what I mean by either category, I must first adopt umbrella terms for each. All approaches to prewriting that seem to be material-oriented, I will categorize as "intellectual" (the term is most unsatisfactory, but I have found none better); all approaches that seem to be self-oriented, I will categorize as "intuitional."

Now to set out the surface features of each, beginning with the "intellectual," by which I refer to those approaches to prewriting, the pattern of which is basically that of classical rhetoric. "Intellectual," then, refers to any general, that is, not subject-specific, method or process that a writer may impose on his subject to analyze it, or break it down into components, from the study of which he may form an idea about the whole and its parts, either in themselves, or in relation to other materials on the same subject, or in relation to the extensional world, or indeed all three.

Such a method or process--I cannot from my reading think of an exception--depends upon a formal set of questions, the equivalent of classical *topoi*, whether the set is a workaday one like the journalistic formula of *who? what? when/where? why?* and *how?*, to which Burke's dramatistic pentad bears a similarity; or as apparently subject-specific as the social science interview or questionnaire; or as rigorous as the more scientifically oriented process of problem solving (by which I mean problem solving that depends on vertical, or linear, thinking rather than lateral, or alinear, thinking) whose specification of the problem, analysis, formulation, and testing of a hypothesis indicates its relationship to the formal experiment; or whether it is a simplification of the classical *topoi* to *what is it? what is it like or unlike? what caused it?* and *what is to be said about it?* (I am quoting Corbett[6]); or, again, whether it is as comfortable and grab-baggy a heuristic as Richard Larson's, or finally, as subtle and thorough as Pike's procedure through which the unit is examined under three aspects: as a particle--that is, in terms of what may be called its distinct aspect--and as a wave, or process, and as a field--that is, in terms of orderly systems of relationships--and each aspect is examined from three perspectives: contrast, variation, and distribution. What unites these processes and distinguishes them from the "intuitional" in my mind is that each asks the writer to begin by applying a set of questions to his material much as he might hold up a prism to a beam of light, and that each questioning procedure is a heuristic that, in the words of Larson, "can call attention to the importance of data that may at first seem insignificant, and can suggest ways of restructuring a body of data so as to disclose features of an experience that had not been recognized but that are well worth writing about."[7]

Against all these I will set the surface features of the "intuitional" approaches. The "intuitional" approaches do not employ a set of formal, general questions; in fact, they discourage the imposition of any kind of process on the material. Instead, they seek to "generate"--a key word--ideas by forcing the writer to dredge up from his subconscious the impression of the material that he has stored there. Within this category I find the following approaches: lateral or alinear thinking (related to McLuhan's nonlinear logic), which Edward de Bono described as "generative" or "creative" thinking,[8] but which in its end-product seems to me to

be what we used to call "divergent" (as opposed to "convergent") thinking; brainstorming, whether private and written or shared and oral; both mapping and the use of outlines as generators of ideas; journal keeping, on the grounds, according to Rohman, that "the more familiar we are with ourselves, the better the chances of our groping to some discoveries in writing"; Rohman's exercises in meditation[9]; free writing; and even Francis Christensen's Generative Rhetoric, which made the words "generate" and "generative" so popular in the first place, and which is based in part on the belief that "solving the problem of *how to say* helps solve the problem of *what to say*."[10]

But the act of categorizing these approaches to prewriting by scratching at their surface features does not make clear the profound differences between the "intellectual" and the "intuitional." However, if we keep in mind that all the "intellectual" approaches involve a formal analytical apparatus that the writer applies to the material during the prewriting period, then what follows may bring the deeper contrast into focus. First, all the "intuitional" approaches to *inventio*, better here called discovery, depend heavily on the interplay between the spontaneous utterances of the writer (or of the gathering, in the case of group brainstorming) and the subconscious from which they emerge, each feeding the other in no particularly orderly or rational way. Secondly, such approaches, in contrast to the "intellectual," tend by their very nature to be alinear, since they reject the notion of an orderly prewriting process, and some--notably free writing--the notion that there should be a distinct prewriting stage. Thirdly, the "intuitional" approaches tend, as I have already said, to be self- rather than method- or material-oriented and therefore require no apparatus. Finally, they are holistic rather than atomistic; and they are less critical, in the sense of analytical, than they are creative.

Because this last distinction appears to be the basis for all the others, it bears further examination. To that end, I offer here the following quotation about writing as an act of discovery, which Emig uses in her essay, "The Composing Process: Review of the Literature."[11] Gertrude Stein is speaking:

> You will write without thinking of the result in terms of a result, but think of writing in terms of discovery, which is to say the creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought, or afterwards in a recasting. Yes, before in a thought, but not in careful thinking. It will come if it is there and if you will let it come, and if you have anything you will get a sudden creative recognition. You won't know how it was, even what it is, but it will be creation if it came out of the pen and out of you and not out of an architectural drawing of the thing you are doing.

Discovery, then, unlike invention, is a mysterious occurrence for which one can prepare only by *not* preparing. One cannot even say when citing Stein that it is a matter of "finding" versus "making," because *you* don't find *it; it* finds *you*. In other words, one does not create discovery; one allows it. But discovery itself creates, and what it creates is "creative recognition," which, to Stein, is best understood by natural analogy:

> You cannot go into the womb to form the child; it is there and makes itself and comes forth whole--and there it is and you have made it and felt it, but it has come itself--that is creative recognition.

Does the writer have any role at all in the birthing of this recognition? Yes, says Stein, but it is a role solely of restraint:

> You must let it take you and if it seems to take you off the track don't hold back, because that is perhaps where instinctively you want to be and if you hold back and try to be always where you have been before, you will grow dry.

Discovery as creative recognition, writing as organic generation--both depend on an explicit as well as implicit faith in the germinative power of the fictive seed that lies within each of us, and on our not consciously tampering with what it can do; therein lies the fundamental difference between the "intuitional" and the objective, structured, analytical-critical approaches of the "intellectual."

Of course, writers whose prime concern is to create their own verbal worlds rather than to dissect the verbal worlds created by others will immediately appreciate Stein's analogy of the fetus--wasn't it Woolf who, somewhere, spoke of pulling the vision through the knothole?--but theorists and teachers of composition, especially exposition and argumentation, may very well balk, if their focus is on the material and if they are of the "intellectual" kind. Stein is a tutelary deity only for intuitionalists. Consider, for example, Peter Elbow, in whose *Writing Without Teachers* "the paradigm" for the writing process is (also) "the fetus going through all its stages."[12] From here, Elbow elaborates: say what you have to say; keep moving, whatever the direction in which your writing takes you; "grow" your ideas organically; "cook" them together; above all, never give this delicate process the editorial eye ("never hold back") while you are writing, because that may stop you ("you will grow dry").

Since Elbow is a notable exponent of the "intuitional," I would like to spend a moment on his approach. Like other "intuitional" approaches, it is distinctly holistic. That is, if you are blocked, you can begin by what he calls "free writing" on anything at all that comes into your head; eventually the words

will generate an idea (or more precisely--this is me interrupting--you may untangle your anxiety enough so that the real idea can find its way through); the idea will generate further words, and so on. Then you sit back and objectively edit what you have written, and on the basis of that, together with whatever further thoughts may have arisen to modify your views, you use the same method of writing to create a refined version of your original effort. With each effort, the *form* of the writing will become clearer, developing through the refinement of the *idea*, and several, or many, efforts at alternately writing "hot" and editing "cold" should, if I understand this approach, yield you a finished piece of work.

Since, in free writing, words and ideas generate each other spontaneously, discovery cannot occur in a prewriting process because there isn't one; writing and prewriting are simultaneous, the antithesis of what Elbow labels, "the old two-step. . . meaning-into-words model." Harrington, another advocate of free writing, including the separation of the writing and editing processes, offers a further way round the old model by stressing the importance of speed and immediacy in getting words onto paper, for the reason that such writing best "duplicates. . .the speed of thought."[13] (That most self-respecting writers would be appalled should their writing at any stage actually be such a duplication is a side thought I shall resist.)

Now, if, as these intuitionalists indicate, thinking and writing, form and content, are indivisible, and if the writer's orientation is towards, not the material, but himself, his inner workings, then two corollaries must follow: 1) that what the writer's mind has registered about his subject is of value in itself, because the human mind is creative and creativity is good--it is also fun; and 2) that the writer should be guided by two words, "Trust yourself." Unfortunately, since this directive can, and often does, bear the implication that the self to be trusted, the natural, intuitive inner being, is at odds with and threatened by tradition and culture, external authority and systems and formulae, it can also seem to say, "Trust nothing but yourself--and, of course, your instructor, if she's 'into the same trip.'" I admit that I'm intruding on my exposition. Yet I cannot help it, since at this point I am flagged down by my own experience. I have discerned from talking with "converts" to Elbow that his approach (though I don't think he so intended it) can evoke an extremely anti-intellectual, anti-traditional attitude toward the entire writing process; and the student writing samples I have seen, though not bloodless like those of many students traditionally taught, seem too often overly subjective, impressionistic, formless, or, if structured, not necessarily in a form helpful to the reader. And having got started, I would make a more serious protest, one that I'm not alone in making: while this kind of approach encourages a relatively impressive in-class performance (especially from students who have weak

academic backgrounds or who have been traumatized as writers by the rigid notions of previous instructors), it provides the student with no permanent, disciplined pattern of thinking or writing on which she can build in her academic or private future. In short--I will adopt the stance of one who favors an "intellectual" approach--if you teach writing as fundamentally high level fun--and that element always ribbons through "intuitional" approaches--all you will produce is a grasshopper. And God help her when winter comes!

Naturally, the advocate of the "intuitional"--now I will adopt her stance--is not going to let this pass. She will respond that a grasshopper is more engaging than that small, drab, industrious insect, the ant, who spends her days gleaning morsels against unlikely famine. And ants are what traditionalists, advocates of the "intellectual," are teaching their students to be. Work before pleasure, the pleasure strictly determined by the work; discipline before free play, the freedom of the play to be determined by the discipline that precedes it--the metaphor can extend into tedium. "You charge me," the intuitionalist continues, "with irresponsibility, call it what you will. But I have charges to make against you, namely that the formal methods or systems you advocate are disproportionately time consuming to acquire, as well as needless, and worse, inhibiting to the student's thought potential." What bothers her most is that systems *per se* preclude the possibility, she believes, of the whole student becoming engaged with the whole text. "Is that true?" I recently asked a classical rhetorician. "No," he replied. "Any more than learning scales, chords and fingering hampers a musician's creative powers, or learning paradigms inhibits a person trying to acquire a second language. At first she may feel cramped. But once she internalizes the patterns, she need no longer consciously think of them. Then what she wishes to express will come through clearly to her audience, far more clearly, in fact, than were she to follow her natural bent. Besides," he concluded, "the untrained student is never the whole student; she cannot become engaged with the whole text."

One would think the next step in this altercation I have set up to be, what constitutes a whole student? But advocates of the "intuitional" are too smart to fall into that particular quicksand of educational theory. Instead they ask, "Why are you providing students with systems for life anyway? Most don't go on being students, and they are unlikely to spend their lives writing essays. The real, perhaps the only, purpose for us to teach writing is to teach them the discovery of self through response to the materials, because a person who knows herself leads a richer, wiser life than one who doesn't. That is why self-discovery is our goal, and self-expression our means." Or, if they think themselves wits, they may say, "You keep talking about arranging the furniture, whereas my point is that you can't arrange the furniture until you have it."

What interests me about all these charges and countercharges is that, though each makes sense in isolation, in interaction they make one wonder what gives rise to them: a desire to defend one's own approach, or an underlying misconception about both students and prewriting. Let me illustrate.

One hears frequently that students cannot think, by which is usually meant that they cannot think analytically. Advocates of the "intellectual" therefore offer them a heuristic, since heuristics force analytical thinking. At the same time, believing in using a step-by-step method, they say, "You must think *before* you write," because, "unless you know what you want to say, you cannot determine how you want to say it." Yet we all know that, outside of the classroom, students can think analytically and do; otherwise, they would not be able to fix their cars, find errors in a computer program, or make a realistic choice about which college to attend. Nor can we say, "Well, they may be able to analyze in 'life' situations, but they can't in academic ones." Not entirely, since, as Mina Shaughnessy points out superbly in *Errors and Expectations*, students do come up with real propositions, a feat impossible without some kind of analysis. The problem, according to Shaughnessy, lies not at the analytic, nor at the proposition-making level, but at the next; that is, students, unlike the experienced writer, have no sense of the reader, her needs and expectations. Consequently they immediately reach "closure upon a point." To elaborate:

> [the student's] essay tends. . . to be made up of "sentences of thought" rather than "passages of thought," and although the essays are not always short, they tend to be so because of the difficulty the writer has in staying with his point beyond its initial formulation.[14]

As Shaughnessy explains, when a neophyte does not know how to elaborate an idea, or even realize the need to do so, her instinct urges her to move on to another one, with the result that she creates a clutch of propositions that crowd each other out of significance. Shaughnessy, therefore, sees the instructor's first task to be one of making the student aware of reader needs and expectations (of the notion of what Linda Flower calls "reader-based" prose[15]); and the second, to make her jot down the ways by which she arrives at a proposition with the intent that she draw on these ways in developing the proposition for the reader. But most of us are not as perceptive as Shaughnessy. When we see a clutch of propositions, each reaching immediate closure, we see no more than a composite blur. If we have utter faith in one of the "intellectual" approaches, we say, "Aha! This student does not know how to think analytically." And we feel free to impose, *carte blanche*, on the student our particular system, with the result that we inhibit the student's inherent ability to think. Or, if we opt for "intuition," we say, "Aha! this student thinks associatively. Since I do not want to discourage her natural bent, I will use an approach that draws on it," with the result that we deny the student the form or trellis

on which she can train her ability to think. What has gone wrong here? I suggest that each instructor's notion of how a writer is to develop has obscured her seeing the student's already present ability to analyze, however rudimentary, and the student's co-existing inability to understand that writing, to be communication, involves a complex of translative techniques.

Confusion exists also about the thorny issue of creativity. By this I refer not to whether the "intuitional" approaches are more appropriate to creative writing and the "intellectual" to expository and argumentative--though that certainly is a topic worth exploring. No. By creativity I refer here to the question of whether prewriting processes should be linear or alinear, sequential or simultaneous, methodically imposed or organically generated. Proponents of the "intellectual" would make the first choice in each instance, because "that's what we've traditionally done," its being the orderly and fruitful way. And many of us would agree because, as Whorf asserted, the interrelationship between our language and our culture enforces our sense that linearity, sequentiality, and discreteness of steps in a process is the way things operate. (Even proponents of the "intuitional" always insist that periods of, say, lateral thinking be alternated with periods of vertical thinking, free writing with editing. That is, they do not deny the importance of linearity, *et cetera*, but rather assert that one cannot be simultaneously subjective and objective.) But everyone, including surely the traditionalist who warns students against writing closed outlines, knows that there is no real order for creativity, no particular point at which it may arise (thus the warning). Creativity just happens. Within a methodically imposed, linear process. Without it. Before you write. While you write. Or, alas, after you write. No one knows what creativity is or what generates it, only what can hinder it. There seems to me, then, a kind of presumption in all the "intellectual" and "intuitional" approaches, as well as an emptiness at the core of their conflict, since, unless I misunderstand, each camp presupposes that it understands something about what creativity is and how to spark it, whereas, in truth, no heuristic--and no careful avoidance of a heuristic--can determine genuine invention or discovery any more (or any less) than Hopi "preparing behavior" can determine divine favor. Furthermore, each of us knows perfectly well that all effective writers on the prowl for inspiration will use any, every, means to find it, with absolutely no scruples about compatability between one means and another.

A question, more or less objective: does the suggestion that some of the charges and counter-charges are falsely based mean that we should ignore them? Not at all, since each can serve as a valuable warning of how we may skew the development of our more sensitive students if we follow one kind of approach exclusively. To quote Josephine Miles, "Free flow of expression allows for one sort of success and error, careful practice and repetitive analysis for another;"[16] therefore, if we insist on only one kind of approach,

what we may do is either dam the river into dryness or let it lose itself on the plain. Besides, though I find knowing the weaknesses of an approach useful, I find knowing its strengths more useful. Surely only the most rigid-minded critic could deny that the "intuitional" approaches have strengths (though she might not value them) in that they encourage the free flow of thought and, with it often, a lively sense of language, and therefore, often woo the reluctant student of composition into wishing to be an engaged one; or, conversely, could deny that the "intellectual" approaches force a comprehension of the material and a great deal for students to say about it (though whether it would be stimulating or original, she might doubt).

Another question, this one subjective: what have I learned so far from this exploration that might help me to teach more effectively? The honest answer is, "very little." Why? At the outset of this effort, had I been able to work my way through to why I could not invent a discussion about invention and all the recent working done on prewriting, I would have said simply that I am by nature an eclectic, reaching for whatever devices and techniques I think fit a particular student or a particular class (each class, as we all know, being mysteriously able to develop its own personality). But eclecticism, it now comes to me, may signify only a temperamental inability to swallow anyone else's method whole, just as conversion in others may signify a certain lack of inner direction. (I suddenly wonder if this inability of mine isn't born of early years spent in the exhaustingly free atmosphere of "progressive" schools, followed by later, longer years in the suffocation of rigidly traditional ones--but that has no interest, unless one likes to ponder about how many of our preferences as researchers and teachers are actually founded in private emotional quirks.) No. At this point I find other reasons for my lack of positive response, and they may be worth sharing.

First, lest you think I am about to find a fancy, objective way of repeating what I have just said about eclecticism, I will further quote Miles: "Intuition and cognition are complementary, support each other. Intuition invested in learning brings it to life; learning invested in intuition gives it strength to work with new materials to simplify complexities."[17] What can we gather from this? That drawing on inner and outer resources is equally important, which is one reason why, if *inventio* means looking only to the material for ideas, I am against it, and if discovery means looking only to one's responses to the material, I am against it, also. And I am against the second more than the first, because I am not much interested in self-discovery, except in the old-fashioned sense. I believe that to look to and understand the material, and out of that understanding to see its values and significance, is a kind of self-discovery, a very important kind, which, of course, is what the traditionalists have been telling us all along. (That much of the material we provide freshmen precludes the possibility of *any* kind of discovery is beyond the scope of this effort; however, Charles Yarnoff has recently given the matter a good poke.[18])

And, because cognition cannot occur without a sense of wider context ("*Vale*, New Criticism!"), I realize that had I to choose a particular heuristic, I would choose from the "intellectual" approaches and out of these I would be most tempted by Pike's heuristic, because among its several probes, it asks that one analyze one's object of concern both as "one among many of a class" and as "part of a larger system." In other words, it forces the "learning" to which Miles refers.

But then I should pull back, for it is a dismally elaborate heuristic and would tend even more than other "intellectual" approaches--I suspect--to swamp intuition. No, not intuition, but instinct. I see I must make clear the distinction. Using Irmscher as my source, I would say that intuition is the development of the raw "hunch" faculty--instinct--we are naturally endowed with, into an educated one, according to the "perceptions we accumulate, internalize and synthesize into patterns" as a result of long exposure to experience, reading and reflection and to an acquisition of writing skills through practice and repetition.[19] Intuition is an end product; once developed, no system will easily overwhelm it. But the intuition referred to by proponents of the "intuitional" approaches is, in fact, instinct, the raw hunch faculty of students untrained in writing. And it is very much of a sensitive plant. (Also it is invaluable, because without it there would be no creative process.) It is unlikely to become intuition (the creative process will not produce a bloom) unless we help students to begin what Irmscher calls their "gradual accumulation of intuitive resources." Perhaps where we ought start then is with some truly simple system of analysis, such as the journalistic formula, which, on the one hand, assures us and the student of her comprehension of the material and yields her sufficient data to be creative about, and, on the other, leaves her truly unhampered to create within the structure of understanding that reading, thinking, writing and living are helping her establish.

Time. Its lack is the curse of both teacher and student. As I read Irmscher, nodding in agreement, I feel caught between the knowledge that the acquisition of writing skills, like the development of intuition, is a very slow process, and the fact that I have ten weeks in which to instill into my students the fundamentals of university level writing. I know, and my colleagues in basic composition know, that students enrolled at a prestigious university are unlikely to survive unless they can develop a heuristic, find a method, perhaps several methods, to cull available arguments on a subject. The competition is simply too rough. Consequently most of us tend to use some sort of formal, structured approach to *inventio*, and we tell our students that we are doing so because other instructors in the university will expect them to write analytically. Perhaps at the secondary and community college levels such training is inappropriate (though I've always thought a formal exposure to the analytical

process could do no one any harm). The seeker of an A.A. in childcare might well enjoy participating in the consuming middle-class obsession with self-discovery. If she is aliterate, by which I mean that the written word has no value and little meaning for her, then, by seeing her thoughts on paper, she may well come to appreciate and take as substantial what the written word can do. If she is frightened by the idea of writing, then perhaps by making it fun, you will assuage her fears. Here, the "intuitional" approaches seem the most useful.

The shortness of time, the slowness of truly learning--this quandry has always watchdogged everything I read about problems in composition. Then, as I was writing this, I came across Douglas Park's "Theories and Expectations: on Conceiving Composition and Rhetoric as a Discipline." Park suggests that we will fret less if we make a healthy change in our horizons. Despite the pressures of time (and of departmental standards of student expectation), Park says that we must:

> realize that the primary purpose of writing courses is not to assume all responsibility for [the development of] all [writing] skills but to help create the contexts, the sets of understandings and attitudes out of which writing abilities can develop when reinforced by writing in other subject areas and outside of school itself.[20]

That is, if we'd stop aiming in a single semester for "a certain quantum of ability" and realize that writing ability is not "a single thing" or the product of a "very simplistic relationship between clear thinking and correct expression," we would do a better job.

I was greatly cheered by Park, even though the requirements of my job make doing as he urges difficult. Of course, I thought, I read everything about prewriting in such a crabbed state that a positive response can't occur. But Park's words about time went deeper, touching that core of uncommitment with which I began this effort, generating a spark of life. As I read on, I began to ask myself, "Why are we all so anxious about pre-writing, about writing?" "Why the recent proliferation in research in and approaches to teaching composition?" (My original explanation, a concern for improved content as a motivator for improved form, seemed now unsatisfactory.) Finally, "Why are we all in such a hurry to get our students moving?" Park raises this last question also. Noting the kind of urgency that marked Shaughnessy's approach to basic writing students, he comments:

> here the tendency. . . of theory feeding directly into teaching. . .is understandable and even necessary, for basic writing students must bring rapidly to conscious control the most fundamental principles governing language and writing.

But more significantly, he goes on to say:

> To some extent these days we tend to see all our students as basic writing students. We recognize

> that habit, intuition, practice are not playing their part in a culture that does not value writing; we claim for ourselves and accept responsibility of trying to teach basic principles directly and quickly. In this sense, at least, the model of basic writing has become powerful and generally influential for composition studies.

Yes, I said to myself. That's how I see my students today. And myself. But Park is saying more than he seems; he is getting at something that has all along worried me so much that, having at last found it acknowledged, I realize how very much I wanted to find it before. Park has broken what I had come to think of as a conspiracy of tact. Namely, we as teachers are still working within a humanistic frame, one that depends on an inherited cultural background, on reflection, on convention, on a particular set of values, and our students are working outside it. They are products of and consider themselves answerable to the new and very different era of technology. From our standpoint they are not literate,[21] and, unreasonably, we expect elementary and secondary school teachers to make them so. (That they are unable to meet this need is indicated by the large number of students in basic English courses, and just as much by students like those in my freshman rhetoric class this fall who, bright and verbally aggressive though they were, had never heard of *Hamlet* or *Oedipus Rex*--three-quarters of them--and showed no more recognition of the terms "inductive" and "deductive" than had I said them in Athabascan.)

What I am (at last) working towards is this: the contemporary theorist in or teacher of composition at the level of higher education now finds herself responsible for large numbers of students who do not know what an essay is, may possibly never have read one, and who have a weak literary frame of reference, as well as little appreciation for the language and culture we wish them to continue. And, as specialist, she has--I don't mean this rudely--panicked. If she is of the traditional or "intellectual" bent, she has tried, and indeed, keeps trying to create a heuristic that will obviate the need for stronger student preparation, especially in the realm of analytical thinking; if she is of the innovative or "intuitional," she has resorted and will resort to approaches that will never require any intellectual sophistication. Ingenious. But what else, she might ask, can she do? She, like me, has no time to allow for the slow development of the student being trained. No time either--I finally see--to gaze at and study the configuration of the gap that is widening between her cultural frame of reference and her students', which her approaches to prewriting--though she will not say it (think it?)--are meant to close.

So it bothers me, the steady ingenuity that pours across the pages of our journals, because, I think, what too often the

authors offer are emergency measures, compensatory shortcuts, useful, intelligent, even brilliant sometimes, it is true, but at heart unsustaining because the cultural crisis motivating them goes unacknowledged. That is why, for so long, I was completely nonplussed. It is clear now. Again, and this may be purely a personal limitation, whenever I read articles or hear presentations on one approach or another, I find, amidst my marvelling at their cleverness, a bewildering sense that I am in a factory, an invention factory, in which efficiency of output is the chief concern, and the student is of import only as the raw material. I refer not to the student officially designated as a basic writer. We and she both know the gaps between her kind of knowledge and our kind of expectation. But the others, from the various strata of the middle class mostly, who have spent their early years with their eyes glued to the television and their ears to the local rock station and who know more about computers at ten than I do at fifty. I do not know where they are in the minds of researchers in the field of composition, because, though they are sometimes referred to as "the student," they most often are not, these children of the technological era, there at all in any complexity that approaches reality.

So finally where am I? Can I offer you some fine nugget of thought, some fittingly somber but positive conclusion on which to depart? No. Yet if I can supply a Euripedean rather than a Sophoclean ending, I am not entirely out of resources. Park is about to appear again, this time as my *deus ex machina*. Though his concern is the dependence of pedagogy on research, and his area all of composition, I think he will bear me away very nicely:

> The currently fashionable "we need to know". . . might better be replaced with "we need to understand". . . . Importing conceptual structures. . .may help us to understand better, but it risks substituting the appearance of precise knowledge for its substance. We can, on the other hand, come to understand a great deal about composing through careful observation, introspection, contemplation, and reflection. . . .All the understandings teachers of writing need to have, are well worth pursuit in their own right. . . . Moreover, these understandings need to be pursued in their own right if they are to be of any practical worth. For what teachers of writing need, but have not had, is a reservoir of wisdom and sophistication about writing on which to draw.

Is that it? All? No. As Park concludes:

> I see no easy way from our present situation to a more ideal one. Educational structures and traditions have enormous inertia, as do conceptions about what writing instruction ought to be. But we must at least think and argue more about how we should conceive of composition studies and how we should make a case for

them to colleagues, to prospective students, and to society at large. Claiming too much territory in the wrong way will. . . blunt the entire movement. On the other hand, even if it is not wholly possible to get where we should quickly, we can perhaps move closer, faster, by regarding our proper ends.

"Proper ends? What, in regard to prewriting does that mean to you?" you may well call up to my disappearing presence. I can reply only this: "Questions. We need to ask finer and finer questions--of our colleagues, our prospective students, and society at large, and especially of ourselves--about where we are going and how and why, as transmitters of a specific set of culturally-determined skills. We must read the specialists, but not always be running to them for the reassurance of methods and systems. Why? Because, though our having nothing to say is not one of our 'proper ends,' it may be one of our hopes for assessing the crisis we cannot afford to ignore."

NOTES

[1]*Teaching Expository Writing* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979), p. 31.

[2]"Invention," in *Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975), p. 40.

[3]"The Uses of the Unconscious in Composing," *CCC*, XV (February, 1964), p. 7.

[4]"Heuristics and Composition," *CCC*, XXI (December, 1970), p. 396.

[5]"Teaching Students the Art of Discovery," *CCC*, XIX (February, 1968), p. 7.

[6]*The Little Rhetoric* (New York: Wiley, 1977), pp. 17-50. Corbett briefly summarizes the various current approaches to prewriting. Even more useful to me was *Contemporary Rhetoric*, in which Winterowd either in his own words or in selections from other specialists in composition covers a wide range of contemporary approaches to prewriting. All uncited references below are from this source.

[7]"Discovery through Questioning: a Plan for Teaching Rhetorical Invention," *Contemporary Rhetoric*, p. 148.

[8]*Lateral Thinking* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1973), p. 39 ff.

[9]"Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," *CCC*, XVI (May, 1965), pp. 108-10.

[10]*Notes Toward a New Rhetoric* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 15.

[11]*Contemporary Rhetoric*, p. 64.

[12]*Writing Without Teachers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 42 ff. Subsequent references are from chapters 2 and 3.

[13]Harrington, "Teaching Students," p. 12. He continues, "The faster one writes the closer he will come to approximating his best thinking."

[14] *Errors and Expectations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 227.

[15] "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," *CE*, 41 (September, 1979), p. 20.

[16] *Working Out Ideas: Predication and Other Uses of Language* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley/Bay Area Writing Project Curriculum Publication No. 5, 1979), p. 50.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] "Contemporary Theories of Invention in the Rhetorical Tradition," *CE*, 41 (January, 1980), pp. 552-60.

[19] *Teaching Expository Writing*, Ch. 4 entire.

[20] *CE*, 41 (September, 1979), pp. 50-3 include this and subsequent references.

[21] But to label what is occuring a "literacy crisis" is to not allow ourselves to see its larger dimension.